

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A ribbon cartridge for a thermal transfer printer is configured to provide a retractable feed for a donor ribbon. The ribbon cartridge includes a housing, a roll of donor ribbon wound on a core within the housing, and a clutch operatively coupled to the core. A resilient structure is coupled to the clutch and to the cartridge housing such that the release of energy stored in the resilient structure by advance of the donor ribbon produces retraction of ribbon slack, if the donor ribbon is released or backfed. Alternatively, a ribbon roll having a self-contained clutching and slack take-up capability includes a hollow core configured to receive a roll of ribbon and a clutch having a friction component configured to induce frictional engagement with the core. At least one end of the clutch is adapted to be externally constrained, and a resilient component is located between the friction component and at least one end of the clutch.